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From the Christian Guardian.

MRS. WESLEY.

WIFE OF THE CELEBRATED JOHN WESLEY—NO. VI.

From her departure in 1771, until her death in 1781.

In the year 1772, nothing scarcely appears concerning Mrs. Wesley. In the spring Mr. W. went up through the north of England, and spent several weeks in Scotland; and on his return to London he passed through Newcastle, where his wife lived, but says nothing of her, only,

"June 30th.—Calling at a little inn on the moors, I spoke a few words to an old man there, as my wife did to the woman of the house. They both appeared to be deeply affected. Perhaps Providence sent us to this house for the sake of these two poor souls."

Two weeks after he left Newcastle, Mr. W. was travelling in Yorkshire. On his way to a place called Otley, he called at a "little inn on the moors," and wishing to be useful, he "spoke a few words to an old man there." And, to complete the little narrative, he shows what his wife "did to the woman of the house," and closes with the reflection, that perhaps Providence directed their way to the little inn, for the conversion of "these two poor souls." The notice in the journal is very important, giving us the first information of Mrs. W. since her departure. Husband and wife were once more together; were travelling together, were stopping at an inn together, were usefully improving their stay together, were together under (as he thought) the direction of Providence, and together went on their journey. Though she never returned to him, yet when he called upon her at Newcastle, she seems to have received him kindly, and accompanied him to some of the appointments. As she spoke so touchingly to the woman of the inn, on the concerns of the soul, causing her to be "deeply affected," we may charitably infer that Mrs. W. was not now indifferent to the case of her own soul. As she was travelling again with her husband, surely her old affection was revived, and again differences were accommodated, and peace once more proclaimed. I was very much pleased to find lately the incident at the "little inn," in the journals, because I never noticed it before; secondly, because it is doubtful if it was ever noticed before, at least, to the benefit of the wife; thirdly, because all the inferences from the incident are so favorable to the erring wife, who was also the often weeping penitent; and fourthly, because, besides this notice, nothing else seems to shed any cheerful light on the narrative of the last ten years of the life of the "unhappy lady." I am glad to point to the entry of the journal of June 30th, 1772. Indeed, my object in writing at all was, not to exhibit the bad qualities of the wife of our Founder, but rather to show the good points of her character and the useful actions of her life. The former has been done sufficiently by Mr. W.'s biographers; but the latter, I think, no one has ever attempted before. Yet, to make a faithful picture, I have had to introduce the repulsive features as well as the agreeable; not, however, with any complacency. I can find, I am sorry to say, no other incident to mitigate the case, or to lighten the course of those who regard John Wesley as a saint. After 1772, little can be known of Mrs. Wesley, and that little is not to her advantage.

In 1774, we come to the worst part of Mrs. Wesley's conduct, and to the exhibition of the worst quality in her character, viz., malignity. In Watson's life of Wesley there is a description of the manner in which the disposition was manifested, and an anecdote in illustration of which may here be quoted:

"The worst part of Mrs. Wesley's conduct," says Mr. Watson, and which only the supposition of a degree of insanity, excited by a jealousy, can palliate, was that she interpolated several letters, which he had intercepted, and as to make them bear a bad construction; and as Mr. Wesley had always maintained a large correspondence with all classes of persons, and among others with pious families, in some of whose letters there were strong expressions of Christian affection, she availed herself of this means of defaming him. Some of these she read to different persons in private, and especially to Mr. Wesley's opponents and enemies, adding extensive passages in the same tone of voice, but taking care not to allow the letters themselves to be read by the auditors; and in one or two instances she published interpolated or forged letters in the public prints. How he conducted himself amidst these vexations, the following passage in a letter from Miss Wesley to a friend, written a little before her death, will show. They are at once important, and explanatory of the kind of annoyance to which this unhappy marriage subjected her uncle, and as containing an anecdote strongly illustrative of his character—

"I think it was in the year 1774 my uncle promised to take me with him to Canterbury and Dover. About this time Mrs. Wesley had obtained some letters which she used to the most injurious purposes, misinterpreting spiritual expressions, and interpolating words. These she read to some Calvinists, and they were sent to the Morning Post. A Calvinist gentleman, who esteemed my father and uncle, came to the former, and told him that, for the sake of religion, the publication should be stopped, and Mr. John Wesley be allowed to answer for himself. As Mrs. Wesley had read, but did not show the letters to him, he had some doubts of their authenticity; and though they were addressed to Mr. John Wesley, they might be forgeries; at any rate he ought not to leave town at such a juncture, but clear the matter satisfactorily."

"My dear father, to whom the reputation of my uncle was far dearer than his own, immediately saw the importance of refutation, and set off to the Foundry to induce him to postpone his journey, while, in my own mind, was lamenting such a disappointment, having anticipated it with all the impatience natural to my years. Never shall I forget the manner in which my father accosted my mother on his return home. 'My brother,' says he, 'is indeed an extraordinary man.' I placed before him the importance of the character of a minister; the evil consequences which might result from his indifference to it; the cause of religion; stumbling blocks cast in the way of the weak; and urged him by every relative and public motive to answer for himself and stop the publication. His reply was, Brother, when I devoted to God my case, my time, my life, did I expect my reputation? No. Tell Sally I will take her to Canterbury to-morrow."

"I ought to add, that the letters in question were satisfactorily proved to be mutilated, and no scandal resulted from his trust in God."

"Some of these letters mutilated, interpolated, or forged by this unhappy woman, have got into different hands, and are still preserved. In the papers of the Wesley family, recently collected, there are, however, sufficient materials for a full explanation of the whole case in detail; but as Mr. Wesley himself spared it, no one will, I presume, ever further disturb this unpleasant affair, unless some publication on the part of an enemy, for the sake of gain, or to gratify a party feeling, should render it necessary to defend the character of this holy and unsuspecting man."

As Mr. Watson thought, so doubtless all will think, that the last part of the unhappy wife's conduct was the worst. She had embittered twenty-four years of her husband's life, and had done what she could to retard the great apostolic work in which he was engaged. Notwithstanding all the obstacles within his own house and without, he had pursued the even tenor of his way from his youth to his old age, and had now earned a glorious reputation and a shining name—a name to be engraved in the religious history of his nation—aye, more, in the religious history of the world—and now this foolish and wicked woman plots and strives to defame his character, destroy his fame, and injure his name to all posterity. Her jealousy, long nursed and strongly glowing, was an established passion. No proof did she or could she ever discover of guilt in her pure and unstraying husband. As she could not find proof, she made proof; and out of innocent appearances, her jealousy framed tales strong in guile, and tragedies "dark as Erebus." In her own inventions she believed; and on her belief the passion lived and grew. And now the last fruit of jealousy came forth. He who has the object of her jealousy, was now the object of her hatred. And her hatred incited her to revenge. She believed him guilty. His guiltiness was her own wrong. She resolved to be revenged for her wrong. Jealousy at this juncture often lays hold of the dagger, and stabs the person of the wronger. She, stinging not for her own sake, but for the sake of her husband, and for the sake of her name, laid hold of the dagger of slander and stabs the reputation of the injured. So she pursues her revenge, and her open-mouthed passion drinks down greedily the satisfying draughts. Some may think the language too strong for the case; but others know that no language is too strong enough to depict jealousy acting on revenge. I see nothing of "insanity" (as good Mr. Watson intimates) in Mrs. Wesley's course, but only the natural ending of such a passion, i. e. jealousy ending in malevolence. In the "unhappy lady" (as Mr. Perrot called her) I see no evidence that she was before human nature in the way of her feelings or her passions (as the insane); but there may have been in them something else, nature, and coming from and allied to the evil but mighty spirit who

"Through the air, and dark heaven,
And rule the lower world,"

and, chiefly through the use of the passions of the human race,

The particular occurrence which Miss Wesley (daughter of Charles Wesley) relates, took place in the beginning of December. She seems to have been in London, whether her uncle arrived on the 8th, and promised to take her with him to Canterbury and Dover. The forgeries seem to have been sent to the "Morning Post" of the 9th or 10th. Charles Wesley saw his brother and urged a refutation on the 11th. "Tell Sally," replied Mr. W., "I will take her to Canterbury to-morrow."

And the next day, as the journal shows, he preached in Canterbury; and the day after at Dover. Nor did he return to London before the 26th. He had given his case, his life, his time to the Lord; nor did he except his reputation.

In what way Mrs. Wesley designed to injure her husband's character by these letters, does not exactly appear. Mr. Wesley does not mention the letter to Mr. Perrot, whose letter decided

her only intimates that the letters were from "pious females, in some of whose letters there were strong expressions of Christian affection." Probably the wife was the kind of letter which Mrs. W. obtained, and interpolated so as to make them carry a guilty meaning. "These she read to some Calvinists" (no friends to our Founder, and no great friends even yet to his followers) "and they were sent" (by the Calvinists) "to the Morning Post."

But the mutilation of the letters was afterwards proved, and no harm came to the man whose wife had so maliciously tampered with his letters; but with the bene the antidote is also in existence. However, Mr. Watson hoped, and so all Mr. Wesley's friends will hope, that "no one will ever further disturb this unpleasant affair." Our Founder's innocence was vindicated fully in his own lifetime; and it is now too late for his enemies, by his wife's mutilation and forgeries, to prove him guilty. The unhappy woman, in violating the ninth commandment, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor," against her own husband, did not accomplish her end, yet her sin returned upon her own head. "A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape." (Prov. xix, 5.)

In 1779, we find Mr. W. in Scotland; and when at the residence of Sir Alexander Grant, near Farries, he was received with cordial affection, as well as Mrs. Smith and her little girl, traveling with him. And here, says he, "I had the satisfaction to observe my daughter smilingly recovering her strength, almost every day." This Mrs. Smith was his wife's child, by her first husband, and now traveling with her second husband. Though he had no association with his wife, he still retained kind affections toward her children; and though the mother hated and had cast off her husband, the children seemed to have retained their affection and confidence in him. Thus much seems implied in the traveling of the "daughter" with her mother's husband. And the brief notice gives an obscure light on the domestic or private life of our Founder at the present time.

"Friday 12, I came to London. If she died in the morning, he would be in Bristol or leaving; if in the forenoon, he was near or at Devizes; if in the afternoon or evening, he was at or near Sarum. The precise hour of her death, I cannot ascertain. In the labors of this busy Monday, little thought the husband that his wife was going to the way of all the earth, and her spirit returning to God who gave it. Not knowing of the decease of his wife, he passed to his appointed work on Tuesday, on Wednesday on Thursday, and only learned her death on Friday morning when he came to London. Yet for four days she had lain a corpse, and in her coffin. She died in London, in that part of the metropolis called Camberwell. The day of Mr. Wesley's arrival was the day appointed for the funeral. The husband did not go to the wife's house; and the wife's friends did not send for the husband. He therefore knew nothing of the funeral. So the body of the "unhappy lady" was borne out of her lonely house, carried through the streets of the crowded city, and brought to the Camberwell graveyard, and no chief mourner was in the sorrowful procession. The minister read the solemn funeral service as the sun had gone down in the west; and the evening shades were drawing over the great city and the silent graveyard—teeming with vaults, and graves, and epitaphs—when the body of the wife of the most celebrated man living was lowered into the grave. But no husband was on the brink of it to drop a few words, or bestow a look. And the earth taken out of the ground was thrown in again, and the mournful company returned to their homes. Not only was the husband not present, but did not know of the funeral for a day or two. Says he, "This (Friday) evening she was buried, though I was not informed of it till a day or two after."

after." He remained in town on Saturday and Sunday. Probably it was in some part of Sunday that he learned of the funeral. But nothing hindered him in his work. So on Monday, he set out for Oxfordshire, and "spent five days with much satisfaction among the societies."

Mrs. Wesley died October 8th, 1781, aged probably about seventy years, and in the thirty-first year of her second marriage. She had four children by her first husband, but none by her second. A stone was placed at the head of her grave (and may be still there), setting forth that she was "a woman of exemplary piety, a tender parent, and a sincere friend." So here is the termination of an unhappy life, and of an unhappy marriage. One of the saddest marriages that books give notice of! Cases of jealousy have often ended more tragically, but scarcely any more lingering or more tormenting. Since jealousy turned into hatred, and the revenge of interpolations and forgeries, her husband seems to have dropped her memory. And when he journals her departure, how brief the notice! "I heard she had died. I was informed she was buried." He cannot praise her; nor, nor departed, will he censure her. Nor does the husband's prophecy appear to have been fulfilled, or hope, as expressed to Mr. Hopper, "I do not expect any change until the approach of death." So Mr. Wesley wrote twenty years before the death of his wife.

Was there any change at the "approach of death"? I trust there was a change in the aged woman, and the unhappy wife. There is, however, no appearance of it. I am sorry to say, indeed, there are no particulars of her death, that I can find. I am afraid that an argument can be framed against a change from this very omission. If she died repenting and trusting in her Saviour, would her husband have concealed it? Besides, why did she not send for her husband? The week before her death, he was in Bristol, and could easily have been sent for, had she desired reconciliation, and his forgiveness before she died. Possibly her death was sudden, and no messenger could reach in time. But, after her death, why was no messenger sent by her family, to bring her husband to the funeral of the wife? He could have been found at Winchester on Tuesday, at Newport on Wednesday, at Southampton on Thursday, and in London on Friday, the day of the burial. And yet he knew nothing of the funeral until Sunday! True, when in London on Friday, he might have gone immediately to his wife's house in Camberwell. Or, he might have gone there on Saturday, or on Sunday. But he would not seem to have visited the house at all. It does not appear that he had no wish to see his wife's remains or to accompany them to the grave. Her conduct had completely alienated her husband from her. Yet, as no complaint arose against our Founder, seventy-five years ago, when all the circumstances were known, we have no right to complain now of his not visiting his wife's house, nor of his absence from his wife's funeral, who knew nothing of the circumstances at all. This general course towards her should be remembered, to be believed that he was not actuated by inhumanity, unkindness, or disrespect.

The first Methodist were nearly all gone. Mrs. Wesley was gone. Four years after, in 1785, the letter to Mr. Perrot, whose letter decided

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elves upon one or the other side of the line which upheld the Congregationalists, not only the entire absence of denominational figures, but the uncertainty as to the doctrinal character of individual churches, rather bewildered a student. It is fair to presume, however, that those churches which have since avowed themselves Unitarian, were so, in reality, during this epoch. Assuming this to be the case, the number of churches at different dates were as follows:

Orthodox, 1800 1810 1820 1830
Unitarian, 20 20 20 20

When the denomination had come to occupy its own ground, the matter of statistics naturally came into notice. It developed itself through the "General Association of Massachusetts," which, in 1810, began to publish the statistics which are now annually continued. It must not be supposed, however, that any great reliance is to be placed upon this source of information for early years; imperfections and omissions in its tables are many, and were not printed at all for twenty-two years after its origin. In 1767 there were ten Episcopal Churches; in 1790, 11; in 1800, 13.

State Chs. Clerg. Int. Rep. Com. Conf. S. Chs.

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The items now reported in the "Minutes of the Conventions," are these: name of church, date of organization; minister; baptism, number added by letter, number restored, dismissed, excluded, ceased, died; number of members. The first Baptist Church in Massachusetts, now the "First Baptist Church in Massachusetts," was organized in 1630, was formed in 1665.

III. Protestant Episcopal.
Prior to 1813, no statistics of even tolerable fidelity exist; from that date they are continued (several years excepted) in the Minutes of Conventions of this Diocese, with a good approach to accuracy. The items now reported are—name of church, clergyman, adult baptisms, infant baptisms, total, additions, losses, number of communicants, confirmations, marriages, burials, membership of Sabbath Schools. From these we have selected what points meet our purpose, and by the usual amount of calculation, have obtained the following table: (The first Episcopal Church was organized in 1680; it is now Unitarian—King's Chapel. In 1767 there were ten Episcopal Churches; in 1790, 11; in 1800, 13.)

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For the Herald and Journal.

CLASS MEETING.

"Good evening, Frank, whether bound!"

"Why, where everybody else is, of course—to hear the Hon. Mr. B.—" speech. He takes a bold stand for the right, you know. I would not mind hearing him for considerable. Where does that singing come from?"

"Thursday evening." Yes, O, there is a Methodist class meeting here to-night. They have commenced I suppose. You seem quite charmed with the music."

"Charmed! That's what they call the music of Canaan, I believe, isn't it? Now I suppose you could not prevail upon one of those simpletons to leave that meeting to hear Mr. B.—to-night?"

"Hush, Frank, my mother's there!"

"O, is she? Pardon me—but meet me at the hall at seven this evening. Good bye."

Thus passed the two young men, and thus they met an hour afterward at the hall, where an overflowing assembly had gathered to listen to the talented B.—, as he discussed with powerful eloquence the exciting questions of the day. There we will leave them, and return to the little class-meeting.

'Twas holden in a small room of an humble habitation, (class meetings often are) and a little band of Christians had assembled to tell of God's goodness, their own religious experience, and their prospects for the future in this world and the next; the fruits of seventy winters were on his brow, and traces of care, and toil, and sorrow were impressed there, yet he had tutored to the class meeting, and his faltering voice was raised in praise to Him by whose aid he had buffeted the billows of life. His frail bark soon after anchored in the "port of peace."

Men and women there were in the middle years of life—some rich, some poor, some learned, and some unlearned, yet all had more or less the cares of life, and all found it good to steal awhile away, and mingle their hopes and fears in Christian communion. Aye, and one was there with the bloom of youth on her brow, and a heart untouched with care or sorrow, who had just escaped the snare of the devil, and rejoiced that she was now a child of God. One by one they rose and told of their trials, and victories, and the sustaining grace of Jesus; and words of encouragement and counsel fell from the lips of their leader in spiritual things like balm to a weary spirit, and ever and anon some voice rose forth in singing some good tune, till every heart felt that it was good to be there. It was a place "privileged beyond the common walks of life."

What mattered it to them that shouts of applause rose from the excited multitude, as burst after burst of eloquence issued from the lips of the gifted speaker? To what to them that the shrewd business man had, that very hour, met with success in some grand speculation. What the least of the votaries of pleasure, who looked from their hall of mirth on the humble life beaming from that cottage window! O, nothing. The busy, outside world passed as ever—it affected not the enjoyment of those worshippers. They were enjoying a foretaste of heaven.

O, the class meeting! there is no place like it. There is no place where Christian communion is so free of wealth and poverty, learning and ignorance, and wickedness and hypocrisy sit side by side with deep, humble piety; even our prayers-meetings are not so select. The sinners found the class meeting, and the hypocrite is seldom found there. There God's children draw aside from all opposing influences

